



CLIMACTERIS SCANDENS. Temm.

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CLIMACTERIS SCANDENS, Temm.

Brown Tree-Creeper.

Buff-winged Honey-eater, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iv. p. 178.

Climacteris scandens, Temm. Pl. Col. 281. fig. 2.—Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 296.

THE BROWN Tree-Creeper inhabits the whole of the south-eastern portion of the Australian continent, from South Australia to New South Wales. It gives a decided preference to the open thinly-timbered forests of *Eucalypti*, as well as the flats studded with the apple-trees (*Angophoræ*), the bark of which, being rough and uneven, affords numerous retreats for various tribes of insects; its food, however, is not only sought for upon the boles and branches of the trees, but is obtained by penetrating the decayed and hollow parts; and it even dives into the small hollow spouts of the branches in search of spiders, ants, and other insects: although its form would lead to a contrary supposition, it spends much of its time on the ground, under the canopy and near the boles of the larger trees, in a similar pursuit, and also traverses the fallen trunks with a keen and scrutinizing eye. While on the ground it has a pert lively action, passing over the surface in a succession of quick shuffling hops, carrying its head erect with the feathers puffed out, almost in the form of a crest. Among the trees it assumes all the actions of the true Creeper, ascending the upright boles, and traversing with the greatest facility both the upper and under sides of the branches. It never descends with the head downwards, like the members of the genera *Sitta* and *Sittella*; still I have seen it descend an upright bole for a short distance, by hopping or shuffling backwards, as it were, generally making a spiral course.

It flies with a skimming motion of the wings, during which the brown marking of the primaries is very conspicuous.

Like many other insectivorous birds in Australia, it seldom, if ever, resorts to the water for the purpose of drinking. It has a sharp piercing cry, which is frequently uttered, especially if the tree upon which it is climbing be approached.

The breeding-season commences in August and continues until January. The nest is generally placed deep down in a hollow branch, and those I found were entirely composed of the hair of the Opossum, and, judging from its brightness and freshness, had doubtless been plucked from the living animal while reposing in the hollow trees. The eggs in all the nests I took were two in number, of a reddish flesh-colour, thickly blotched all over with reddish brown; they are ten and a half lines long by eight lines broad.

The male has the crown of the head blackish brown; lores black; line over the eye and the throat dull buff; at the base of the throat a few indistinct blackish brown spots; all the upper surface rufous brown; primaries blackish brown at the base and light brown at the tip, all but the first crossed in the centre by a broad band of buff, to which succeeds another broad band of blackish brown; tail brown, all but the two centre feathers crossed by a broad band of blackish brown; all the under surface greyish brown, each feather of the chest and abdomen having a stripe of dull white, bounded on either side with black, running down the centre; under tail-coverts reddish buff, crossed by irregular bars of black; irides, bill and feet blackish brown.

Little difference is observable either in the colour or size of the sexes; the female may, nevertheless, be at once distinguished from her mate by the spots at the base of the throat being rufous instead of blackish brown as in the male.

The figures are those of a male and a female of the natural size.